

## A powerful new Anomalous Monism

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A Powerful New Anomalous Monism

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**Abstract**

I distinguish between two broadly different interpretations of anomalous monism. I then pose problems for both. I argue that one interpretation leads to well known problems concerning epiphenomenalism, whilst the other interpretation is implausible because it fails to give a good account of the role of properties in causation. I then develop a new version of anomalous monism, which can avoid both of these issues. This view draws heavily on the metaphysics of dispositions, as well as work on causation. I conclude that anomalous monism is deserving of a reappraisal.

Keywords: Anomalous monism, Properties, Epiphenomenalism, Laws.

**1. What is Anomalous monism?**

Anomalous monism was famously put forward by Donald Davidson (1970a). Three claims lie at its core (Davidson 1970a: 105-106):

- i) The Principle of Causal Interaction: at least some mental events interact causally with physical events.
- ii) The Nomological Character of Causality: where there is causality, there must be a law. That is to say, events related as cause and effect fall under strict deterministic laws.
- iii) The Anomalism of the Mental: there are no strict deterministic laws on the basis of which mental events can be predicted and explained.

I will not primarily be concerned with providing *motivation* for these claims. This is not to say that the motivations for them are unimportant or that the claims are

uncontentious. For example, Davidson describes claim (iii) as 'true and worth arguing for' (1993: 3), though many have thought that it is neither true, nor worth arguing for (Crane and Mellor 1990: 196). (i) and (ii) are also controversial: most would accept (i), though its acceptance is by no means universal (Jackson 1982) and some do not believe in laws at all, and so would presumably reject (ii) (Mumford 2004: ch.9, van Frassen 1989). So, it is an important and substantial question whether we should accept (i-iii). Nonetheless, it is not a question that will be considered in this paper. Rather, I am primarily interested in whether there is a view of the mind that can reconcile these claims, rather than with providing the background reasons one might have to accept them.<sup>1</sup>

Though the motivations for these claims will not be directly addressed, it is worth noting that this paper is still of interest to those unconvinced by (i-iii). This is because once these claims are correctly fleshed out, they turn out to be more anodyne than perhaps they initially appear. This, in turn, may alleviate resistance to them.

It is also worth emphasising that anomalous monists may accept weakened versions of these claims. For example, few contemporary thinkers would accept that causes and effects must fall under *deterministic* laws, as (ii) asserts. However, a view that denies that laws are deterministic, but otherwise accepts (ii) and a suitably modified version of (iii), would clearly still deserve the name 'anomalous monism'. This paper is not concerned with discussing these minor modifications of claims (i-iii), so I will leave them as they are in what follows.

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<sup>1</sup> My approach is similar in this way to Davidson's own, though he does give some reasons to accept (iii), which is the most contentious of the claims (1970a: 118-119).

Davidson's view has been interpreted in various importantly different ways. In section 2, I divide these interpretations into two broad kinds, which I call the 'property dualist' and the 'nominalist' interpretations. I outline one objection to each interpretation, and argue that a third version of anomalous monism is required. I develop one in sections 3-5, arguing that this version can avoid both of the problems associated with the other two interpretations. I conclude that this is the best version of anomalous monism. In section 6, I discuss the relation of this view to mind-brain identity theory and in section 7, I discuss what impact the view has on the ontology of events.

In this paper, I will take anomalous monism to be any view of the mind that embraces (i-iii), or perhaps some minor modifications of these claims. So, as I use the term, we need not accept all of the claims that Davidson himself accepted in order to be anomalous monists: to be an anomalous monist we just need to preserve the three core claims. Relatedly, I should be clear that I certainly do not claim that the version of anomalous monism that I develop is what Davidson actually had in mind. On the contrary, for reasons that will become clear, I think this is not the case. So, I do not claim that Davidson would be happy with the view, just that it is the most plausible view of the mind that reconciles (i-iii).

It may be asked why readers should care about anomalous monism. After all, the view has largely fallen out of favour in the contemporary debate, and is rarely discussed in the metaphysics of mind these days. In response to this, I say that we should examine the strongest version of a position before we dismiss it. It is my contention that the strongest version of anomalous monism has yet to be supplied. The view argued for in this paper can avoid the objections that have been thought by

many to be fatal for anomalous monism. Therefore, if what I say in this paper is correct, then the current unpopularity of anomalous monism is unjustified, and the view is deserving of a reappraisal.

## **2. Two interpretations, two objections.**

I divide interpretations of anomalous monism into two broad classes. These classes are distinguished by how they interpret the word 'property'. Sometimes, 'property' is used in a realist sense, to refer to a real constituent of the world, which exists independently of the way we describe it. For example, plausibly the charge of a particular electron is a feature of the electron, which would exist even if humans did not exist, and could not describe it, and is distinct from all of its other properties such as its mass. On this meaning, to say that an object has a property is metaphysically heavyweight: it means that it has some objective, real feature.

Conversely, sometimes 'property' is used in a less heavyweight sense, where properties are more closely allied with concepts, or predicates, or descriptions. On this use, to say that an object has a certain property just means that a certain predicate (description/concept) applies truly to it, but this does not imply that there must be one single unique *property* (in the heavyweight sense) that the object has in virtue of which that predicate applies to it.<sup>2</sup>

For example, it is certainly true to say of me that I am 'not the Eiffel Tower'. In the lightweight sense, then, I have the property of being not the Eiffel Tower (because it is true to say of me that I am not the Eiffel Tower). In the more heavyweight sense, though, I do not have a single property of being not the Eiffel

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction in the way that 'property' is used will be familiar to metaphysicians, e.g. Mellor (1991) and Heil (2003: 22-30).

Tower. Rather, I have properties such as mass, height and so on. In addition to all of these properties, I do not have the *additional* property of being not the Eiffel Tower. If we were to list all of the real elements of our ontology, my property of being not the Eiffel Tower would not appear there.

For clarity, in this paper, when I say ‘property’ I mean the heavyweight sense. For the second sense, I will simply talk of *predicates* or *descriptions*, which truly apply to certain entities. With this distinction in place, we can examine the different interpretations of anomalous monism.

### 2.1 *Property Dualism*

The first interpretation of anomalous monism is familiar from the work of Jaegwon Kim (1985, 1993) and Brian McLaughlin (1993), amongst others. On this interpretation, Davidson claims that mental events have two distinct kinds of *properties*: mental and physical ones. This interpretation of anomalous monism thus takes Davidson to be a property realist, and for the mental and the physical to be distinct properties of the same events. On this view, mental and physical descriptions both pick out the same events, albeit in virtue of distinct properties of those events.

The implausibility of this version of anomalous monism is well known. Opponents of this view argue that integrating this view with the three claims at the core of anomalous monism causes problems. Specifically, they claim that because of the anomalousness of the mental, claim (iii), mental properties cannot feature in any strict laws. Since mental properties do not feature in any strict laws, then they cannot

contribute to any of the causal powers that the event has (claim (ii)).<sup>3</sup> In short, mental properties do not feature in laws, and without laws, there is no causation. Opponents who push this line accept that mental events have causal powers, but they insist that mental events *cannot have causal powers in virtue of their mental properties*. Such thinkers thus accuse anomalous monism of implying that mental properties are epiphenomenal (Kim 1993).<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Nominalism

The second interpretation of anomalous monism differs crucially in that it does not ascribe to Davidson a realist view of properties, but instead takes seriously Davidson's nominalism (Heil 2008, Gibb 2012). Proponents of this interpretation sometimes point out that Davidson admits *events* into his ontology, because we must quantify over them (1969, 1970b).<sup>5</sup> However (on this interpretation) he does not admit *properties* in the ontologically heavyweight sense. Proponents of this interpretation urge that rather than thinking of events as having mental and physical *properties*, we should rather think of events as being amenable to mental and physical *descriptions*.

If this interpretation is correct, then the accusation of epiphenomenalism fizzles out: on this view, it does not make sense to say that mental events only cause things in virtue of their physical (rather than their mental) properties. Rather, events simply

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<sup>3</sup> Because (by (ii)), if they did contribute to the event's causal powers on the physical, then there must be *laws* linking the mental to the physical (i.e. psychophysical laws) and (iii) would be violated.

<sup>4</sup> Kim and McLaughlin provide the canonical accusation of epiphenomenalism against anomalous monism. See Campbell (2005) for a different approach to the issue of epiphenomenalism and anomalous monism.

<sup>5</sup> Here Davidson is taking his inspiration from Quine's (1948) criterion for ontological commitment: we are committed to that which we quantify over.

cause things, and because (as a nominalist) Davidson does not admit properties into his ontology, it makes no sense to ask which properties the event caused something in virtue of. Certainly (on this interpretation of anomalous monism) it is true that certain events can be *described* using mental and physical predicates. Indeed, these different mental and physical descriptions may figure in different *causal explanations*, which are importantly different in various ways. However, these descriptions cast no ontological shadow: they do not come with ontologically heavyweight commitment to mental and physical *properties*, at least not according to this interpretation of Davidson (Heil 2008 and Gibb 2012).

This version of anomalous monism has the advantage of dodging the accusation of the epiphenomenalism of the mental, but the nominalistic metaphysics that it relies upon carries unwelcome consequences. Specifically, by doing away with *properties* of events, and only admitting *descriptions* of events, it becomes impossible to say that events cause things in virtue of certain of their specific properties. This result is implausible. Consider someone throwing a brick at a window, and the window's smashing. Here we have two events (the throwing and the smashing) linked as cause and effect. And yet it seems clear that there are certain properties of the former event (such as the force of the throwing) that are causally relevant to the smashing; and other properties (such as the time of day of the throwing) that are not relevant to the smashing. Davidson's ontology has the implausible consequence that it is not literally true that certain properties of the throwing are causally relevant, whilst others are not (because he is a nominalist about properties). Rather, Davidson must claim that the throwing simply causes the smashing, and that any talk of the *properties* of each event must be construed in a metaphysically anodyne way simply



as *descriptions* of the events, and as causal *explanations* of them. The implausibility of this result is the primary problem for the second interpretation of Davidson.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. A powerful anomalous monism

There are two things to notice about these two objections to anomalous monism:

First, note that the problem for the nominalistic interpretation of Davidson arises because of the very thing that solved the problem with the property dualist interpretation. That is to say, banning properties from our ontology and accepting nominalism is what solved the problem of the epiphenomenalism of the mental, but banning properties is precisely what generates implausible consequences for the nominalistic view. Second, note that the two objections are very different in spirit. The objection to the property dualist interpretation applies pressure internal to the philosophy of mind: it threatens to make the mental epiphenomenal. Conversely, the objection to the nominalistic interpretation applies pressure from outside of philosophy of mind: from the background metaphysics because it results in an implausible view of causal interaction generally. A solution will have to alleviate both the internal and external pressure.

Start with the external pressure that besets the nominalist version of anomalous monism. We will not be able to release this pressure unless we admit properties into

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<sup>6</sup> Notice that in this example, I am distinguishing between the causally efficacious and causally inefficacious properties *of the event*. Of course, there is also a need to distinguish between the efficacious and the inefficacious properties *of the objects* that participate in the event. For example, certain properties of *the brick* (such as its mass and solidity) will be causally relevant to the smashing, and other properties of the brick (such as its colour) will not be. Likewise for the window. Of course, Davidson's inability to distinguish between causally efficacious and causally inefficacious properties arises with both events and objects case, since (on this nominalistic interpretation) Davidson would admit neither properties of objects or of events into his ontology. It is an important question whether the properties of events can be reduced or explained away in terms of the properties of objects that participate in those events, but I will not discuss that issue here.

our ontology, because without properties, we certainly cannot claim that an event caused another in virtue of certain of its properties but not others. This will mean a revision to Davidson's nominalist metaphysics. However, as we have seen, the nominalist metaphysics is independently implausible when it comes to matters of causation, so a revision is no loss.

By admitting properties, we can say that the throwing of the brick caused the smashing in virtue of certain of its properties, but not in virtue of others. Thus, the external, ontological pressure on anomalous monism from the metaphysics of causation is alleviated. However, if we do admit properties into our ontology, then how can we avoid the problems associated with the property dualist interpretation of anomalous monism? And how can we make sense of the three claims at the heart of anomalous monism?

The difficulty for the property dualist interpretation of anomalous monism stems from the claim that mental and physical properties are *distinct* properties of events. Only once we claim that mental and physical properties are distinct properties of events can we ask which ones caused a certain effect, and only then can questions of causal competition between physical and mental properties arise. However, we can reject this assumption. Rather, we can claim that events have certain properties, but claim that the mental properties of events are identical with certain of their physical properties. Once we have this identity, we cannot ask whether the mental event has causal powers in virtue of its mental or physical properties because the mental properties *are* physical.

On the view I recommend, physical and mental descriptions both pick out the same event, and each one can do so in virtue of a *property* of the event, but the

property of the event that is picked out by the physical description is identical with the property of the event picked out by the mental description. In this way, the properties that answer to mental descriptions and the properties that answer to physical ones are *the very same properties*: they are identical. Thus, since the property picked out by the mental description is no different from the property picked out by the other, there is no competition between the two properties, and the threat of epiphenomenalism is avoided.

For example, we may pick out a certain event using a mental description, such as ‘the experience of pain’. This description picks out a certain event in virtue of one of its properties (its painfulness). Another, physical description of an event, such as ‘nociceptors firing’ could serve to pick out the same event, also in virtue of one of its properties (its property of firing, say). However, if we are to avoid the threat of epiphenomenalism, we must reject the claim that these descriptions latch on to distinct physical and mental properties. Rather, the two properties are to be *identified*, and questions of causal competition never arise.<sup>7</sup>

This view takes elements from both interpretations of anomalous monism we discussed in §2. From the first, it takes properties ontologically seriously, and from the second, it takes the idea that the difference between the mental and the physical should be seen as a difference in the *predicates* or *descriptions* applied to certain events, rather than ontologically robust differences in the events or properties themselves.

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<sup>7</sup> Keen readers will notice a similarity here between the view I proposed and certain versions of mind-brain identity theory (Smart 1959), especially the so called ‘phenomenal concept strategy’ versions of identity theory (Papineau 2002). These similarities will be discussed in §6.

So far, I hope to have shown how we can avoid the two pressures applied to the different interpretations of anomalous monism. However, currently I have not said how this view can account for the three claims at the heart of anomalous monism. Without doing this, the view is no version of anomalous monism at all. It is to this issue that I now turn.

#### **4. Laws, dispositions and nomological connections.**

The important question at this point, of course, is what sense can be made of the causal efficacy of the mental (i) in the light of the claim that causation requires a strict law (ii) and that there are no strict laws on the basis of which mental events can be predicted and explained (iii)? In what follows, I will explain how we can accommodate all of these claims within the framework sketched above. In doing this, the view I propose will become clearer.

##### *4.1 Predicates, dispositions and causation.*

To answer these questions, we will need some more claims about mental and physical predicates on the table, as well as some claims about causation.<sup>8</sup> Some descriptions pick out their referents in terms of their dispositional characteristics. For example, the predicate 'is fragile' picks out its referent in virtue of its dispositional profile: to be fragile is to be disposed to smash *if* a certain force is applied to it (*certis paribus*). We can call descriptions that make use of these predicates *dispositional descriptions*.

Now, plausibly, at least some physical predicates are dispositional predicates. That is to say, when we pick out entities using physical predicates, we are picking them out in terms of their dispositional profile (at least sometimes). As Chalmers

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<sup>8</sup> I develop this view of mental and physical predicates further in Taylor (2017).

says ‘a property such as mass is characterised by its associated dispositional role, such as the tendency to resist acceleration’ (2010: 133).<sup>9</sup>

Notice the modesty of my claim: it is not that *all* physical predicates are dispositional, and it is not that all dispositional properties can be described by physics.<sup>10</sup> It is just that at least some physical predicates are dispositional in this way. Now, contrast those with mental predicates. Plausibly, mental predicates are not dispositional in this way: to characterise something as a particular conscious experience, or (to borrow a list from Davidson himself (1970a:105)) a perceiving, remembering, decision or action is not to describe it in terms of what it would do in certain circumstances. Rather, these predicates do not pick out their referents in terms of their dispositional profiles, but describe them entirely in terms of their ‘occurrent’ nature: how they are *now*, rather than how they *would* behave in certain circumstances.

So far, we have the claims that at least some physical predicates are dispositional, and that mental predicates are not like this. Now, to see the connection to causation (and to claims (i-iii)), we will need to explain what I call *dispositional connections*.

What is a ‘dispositional connection’? Well, consider that dispositional properties are linked to other dispositional properties in certain reliable ways. For example, the property of solubility possessed by common salt is reliably linked to properties possessed by water such as dipolarity, and electrostatic attraction, with the result that *if* the properties of the salt come in contact with the properties of the water, then

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<sup>9</sup> See also Blackburn (1990) and Hawthorne (2001: 368).

<sup>10</sup> In Taylor (2016) I demonstrate the dangers of sliding between these different claims.

an event of dissolving will occur (*certis paribus*). In the contemporary jargon, the property of solubility is linked to certain *stimuli* properties, which are the properties that would trigger them to bring about their manifestation (in this case the properties of the water like dipolarity) and *manifestation* properties, which are the properties involved in the events that they would bring about if they come into contact with their stimuli (in this case, the properties involved in the event of dissolving). Indeed, these links to stimuli and manifestation properties are possessed by all dispositional properties. It is these links to stimuli and manifestations that I refer to as ‘dispositional connections’.<sup>11</sup>

A further claim is that the nomological links between different properties can be identified with their dispositional connections. That is to say, properties are connected to one another in certain lawlike ways. For example, the statement ‘ $f=ma$ ’ expresses a nomological relation between the properties of force, mass and acceleration. Anything that has the property of mass will thus hold a relation to acceleration and force, in virtue of having the particular property of mass. The claim I want to urge is that these nomological relations, which bind together properties in a lawlike and reliable web, are to be identified with the dispositional connections of stimulus and manifestation.<sup>12</sup> Nomological connections are dispositional connections.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Some (Martin 2008) prefer to say ‘reciprocal dispositional partners for mutual manifestation’ rather than ‘stimuli’, but nothing I have to say will turn on this issue.

<sup>12</sup> Of course, this assumes a particular view about what nomological connections are, which I do not have space to argue for. For more on this kind of view, see Bird (2007) and also Armstrong (1983).

<sup>13</sup> Notice that this view is neutral on the question of whether these nomological connections are necessary (Bird 2007) or contingent (Armstrong 1983, 1997).

A final note on objects and events: above I have said that *properties* have nomological connections to one another, and I urged that these are to be identified with dispositional connections. We can now also incorporate the idea that objects and events also have nomological relations to each other, in virtue of having such properties. For example, the salt is an object, which has the property of solubility. This property has a dispositional/nomological link to the properties of water. Because of these properties, the salt and the water themselves have such dispositional/nomological relations too: the salt is linked to the water, in virtue of the fact that the salt and the water have properties that have these strong nomological links. *Mutatis mutandis* for events. In what follows, I will tend to talk about nomological connections between *properties*, but it is important to bear in mind that this can be extended to events and objects that instantiate those properties.

#### 4.2 'Law'?

One final terminological point must be made before we can see how all of this helps the anomalous monist. This concerns the term 'law' in the three statements at the core of anomalous monism. The term 'law' is used in at least two different ways, which mirror the heavyweight and lightweight uses of the term 'property' I highlighted above. Sometimes, the term is used to refer to the actual links between different properties in the world: the nomological connections themselves (we find this in Bird 2007). At other times, the term is used to refer simply to a statement or description of a particular nomological connection. On the latter understanding, a *statement* such as ' $f=ma$ ' would be a law, whilst in the former, the law itself would be the actual connection itself between the properties of force, mass and acceleration.

Davidson tends to use the term 'law' in the lightweight sense, as an *expression* or *statement* of a nomological connection, whereas he tends to use the term 'causality' to express the actual nomological connections themselves. He says:

'events instantiate a law only as described in one way rather than another, but we cannot say that an event caused another only as described' (1993: 6).<sup>14</sup>

And:

'Causality and identity are relations between individual events no matter how described. But laws are linguistic; and so events can instantiate laws... only as those events are described in one way or another' (1970a: 111).

Here, an event's instantiating a law is taken to be dependent on how it is described, and it is said that laws are 'linguistic'. This makes no sense if we read him as using the term 'law' as expressing an objective connection between events, which would exist no matter how the events are described. However, if we take the term 'law' to mean a *statement* or *expression* that refers to a particular nomological connection between events, then we can make sense of the idea that an event could be subject to a law only given a certain description (and this clearly fits with his claim that laws are 'linguistic'). With this in mind, I follow Davidson and use 'law' to in the lightweight sense, as an expression or statement of a nomological connection, and the term 'nomological connection' to refer to the actual objective connections in nature between dispositional properties, which explains why they act in law-like manners.

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<sup>14</sup> Though Davidson does add a caveat that this is not 'a happy way of putting the point' (1993: 6).



### 5. Back to the three claims

I have outlined six claims:

- 1) At least some physical predicates are dispositional predicates.
- 2) Mental predicates are not dispositional predicates.
- 3) Dispositional properties are linked with each other through stimulus and manifestation relations.
- 4) The nomological connections that properties have to each other just are these dispositional connections.
- 5) Events and objects can also have nomological connections to one another, in virtue of having properties that have these nomological connections.
- 6) Laws are *expressions* or *statements* that express nomological connections between properties.

We are now in a position to see how the view incorporates anomalous monism's three core claims. The basic ideas are as follows: there are events, which have properties. These events can be referred to in virtue of their properties, and these properties themselves can be picked out under at least two importantly different kinds of description. On the one hand, we can pick out these properties using physical descriptions. At least some of these physical descriptions characterise these properties in terms of their dispositional connections to other properties. These dispositional connections are themselves nomological connections between properties. Because of this, to characterise a property dispositionally is to characterise it in terms of its nomological connections to other properties. Because such descriptions express the nomological connections between properties, it is *these* descriptions that are apt to be laws (it is crucial to recall that by 'laws', I mean

*descriptions* of nomological connections, not the nomological connections themselves). This is why physical descriptions are those in virtue of which events fall under laws.

On the other hand, we can also pick out a property non-dispositionally. This is the case with mental descriptions: they do not characterise phenomena dispositionally. Because mental descriptions are non-dispositional, they do not express the nomological connections between properties. Because a law is just a statement of such a nomological connection, it follows that statements containing mental descriptions are not apt to be laws. As a result, there are no laws that feature mental descriptions. This is the sense in which there are no psychophysical laws: there are no laws featuring mental and physical terms, because mental terms cannot figure in laws. This is the anomalism of the mental. This is (iii).<sup>15</sup>

At this point, making sense of (i) and (ii) becomes easy. Consider (i): the claim that at least some mental events interact causally with physical events. This simply states that there are nomological connections between at least some mental and at least some physical events. Suppose we have some mental event, *e*, which has a nomological connection with some physical event, *p*. This nomological connection holds regardless of how *e* and *p* are described (this follows closely what Davidson means by ‘causality’ in the quotations given above). In virtue of having this nomological connection with *p*, *e* is a mental event that interacts causally with a physical event, so (i) is satisfied.

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<sup>15</sup> For this explanation to work, we need to accept that properties can be picked out using dispositional and non-dispositional descriptions. For more on this idea (and for more information about dispositional and non-dispositional predicates) see Taylor (2017) and (forthcoming: §2.4).

Now, by (ii), it follows from the fact that e and p have this nomological connection that e and p must fall under a law. That means that they must be *describable* in a way that expresses the nomological connection between them. In my view, this is because e and p are amenable to dispositional description using physical predicates. In virtue of being describable in this way, e and p fall under a law, and thus (ii) is satisfied.

The fact that p and e could be described in this dispositional way (and thus fall under a law) does not stop it being true that these events *could also be described using non-dispositional, mental descriptions*. In fact, it is true that e is describable using a mental description, but (crucially) *these mental descriptions do not feature in laws*. Only the physical descriptions can feature in laws. To repeat a point already made, this is because mental descriptions are non-dispositional descriptions, and thus do not express the dispositional/nomological connections between properties, and on the view I urge, a law just is an expression of such a nomological connection. Because these mental descriptions do not feature in laws, there are no laws describing the nomological link between p and e *that feature mental descriptions* (even though there are laws featuring dispositional descriptions, which express the nomological link between p and e). In this sense, there are no psychophysical laws linking p and e. Thus, we satisfy the anomalousness of the mental (claim iii). So, we have satisfied all three of (i), (ii) and (iii). We have full-blooded anomalous monism.

I have outlined a view on which anomalous monism does not collapse into property dualism. Thus, the view avoids the charge of epiphenomenalism. On the view I recommend, anomalous monism also accepts realism about *properties*, and so avoids the problems associated with nominalistic interpretations of anomalous

monism. The view also makes sense of claims (i-iii), and is therefore clearly a version of anomalous monism. Since the view avoids all of the problems associated with other versions, I conclude that it is the best version of anomalous monism available.

## 6. Identity theory

In these final sections, I will discuss two worries that may be levelled at the view that I have developed. The first question is how my view stands to traditional identity theory.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, I have argued that mental and physical descriptions can both co-refer to the same events, and that they both latch on to the same *properties* of those events as well. This sounds a lot like the identity theory of J. J. C. Smart (1959), as well as the more modern incarnations of identity theory such as the ‘phenomenal concept strategy’ (Papineau 2002). To Smart and Papineau, mental events and properties are identical with physical events and properties. Each of them accepts that mental and physical *concepts* are distinct, and that these concepts behave quite differently from each other. However, Smart and Papineau insist that they pick out the same entities (Smart 1959: 144). It may be wondered how my version of anomalous monism is any different from this kind of identity theory.

I am sanguine about the overlap here. Insofar as the proposed version of anomalous monism accepts that mental events and properties are identical with physical events and properties, it clearly is a kind of identity theory. I am perfectly happy to accept this result. My concern in this paper is to develop a version of anomalous monism that is superior to the versions that have gone before. As I have said, I take any view that accepts claims (i-iii) to be a version of anomalous monism.

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<sup>16</sup> Thanks to Laura Gow for pressing me on this.

If this view happens to also be a version of identity theory, then so be it. The view can still claim all of the attractiveness of any anomalous monist view, whether it is also a version of identity theory or not.

More generally, finding that anomalous monism is a version of identity theory should in no way surprise us. Davidson himself says that ‘mental events are identical with physical events’ (1970a: 107). The view developed here just takes two extra steps: it accepts the existence of mental *properties* and then identifies them with physical properties.

Of course, the worry here might be rephrased. It might be said that the worry is not just that the view is a version of mind-brain identity, but rather that the version of anomalous monism developed here does not confer any additional theoretical advantage over the more traditional formulations of identity theory. If we just end up with a version of identity theory, why not just embrace the Smart/Papineau version of identity theory in the first place? The response to this criticism is clear: what my view adds to the traditional mind-brain identity theory is the machinery concerning mental and physical descriptions, dispositional and non-dispositional descriptions, laws of nature and nomological connections. Why is this extra machinery important? Because it is this machinery that is needed to explain how (i-iii) all fit together, and thus to make the view a version of anomalous monism in the first place. So, insofar as anomalous monism is attractive *at all* then this added machinery is attractive. Since the Smart/Papineau version of identity theory does not have this machinery, it cannot claim to be a version of anomalous monism, and so cannot claim the attractiveness of anomalous monism.

Here it is worth re-emphasising that in this paper I have not explicitly examined *why* one should accept claims (i-iii). Rather, I have assumed that it is at least important to see whether a view can be developed which reconciles them in a plausible way. That is the project of this paper, and that is what justifies the additional machinery in addition to the Smart/Papineau view. Of course, for readers who are unattracted to anomalous monism entirely, this will not be compelling. However, since it is not the purpose of this paper to motivate anomalous monism, but rather to provide the best version of the view, this is not the place to attempt to convince those who are already entirely unmoved by the anomalous monist picture.<sup>17</sup>

## 7. Events

In this paper, I have been discussing events, and I have been talking about properties *of* events. Those familiar with Davidson's work may wonder how much damage this does to his view of events. Davidson (1969, 1970b) takes events to be basic particulars, and he says this about how events are individuated:

‘events are identical if and only if they have exactly the same causes and effects’ (1969: 179).

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<sup>17</sup> My opponent might try a third time, and say that the problem is *not* so much that my view is a version of identity theory, and *not* so much that it confers no advantage over identity theory, but that it falls prey to all of the objections that identity theory suffers from, such as the famous ‘knowledge’ and ‘zombie’ arguments (Jackson 1982, Chalmers 2010). In response to this, I say that the additional machinery added here can help the identity theorist deal with these arguments. I do not have space to explain how, but elsewhere I have argued that if we accept that mental properties can be referred to using dispositional and non-dispositional concepts, then the knowledge and zombie arguments can be satisfactorily answered (Taylor 2017). So, these arguments pose no threat to the position developed in this paper.

A worry might be raised here for my proposal. Davidson's account of events makes no mention of *properties*. This is especially clear on nominalistic interpretations of Davidson, on which it is not just that properties don't feature in Davidson's ontology of events, they don't appear anywhere in his ontology at all! My own view clearly and openly makes use of properties, and says that events have properties. Does this mean that my proposed view is incompatible with Davidson's view of events? If so, is that a problem?

Here we could go two ways: the first would be to abandon Davidson's view of events entirely, and embrace an alternate one: one that takes properties ontologically seriously. The obvious choice would be Kim's (1973, 1976) view, on which events are 'property exemplifications'. That is to say, a particular event is a substance's having a property at a time, and events are individuated by all three of these elements: the substance, the property and the time at which they occur. Such a view has a clear and obvious place for *properties*, and as such would be amenable to the anomalous monist position I have put forward.<sup>18</sup> Of course, the Kimian view is the most widely accepted view that places properties centre stage, but any view of events that takes properties seriously (e.g. Bennett 1988, Lombard 1986) would do just as well.

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<sup>18</sup> Notice that, on Kim's account, the sense in which events *have* properties is quite different from the sense in which substances *have* properties. A ball can instantiate the property of redness at time *t*, say. But the *event* of the ball's being red at *t* does not *instantiate* the property of redness (the event is not red). Rather, the event is *essentially constituted* by the property of redness, along with the ball and the time. So (on Kim's account) the sense in which the event *has* a property is the sense of essential constitution, not the sense of instantiation. It is an interesting question whether (on Kim's view) it is possible for an event to instantiate a property in the same way that a ball could instantiate a property such as redness, but I will not discuss that matter here. Personally, I am very attracted to Kim's account, but am agnostic about whether events can instantiate properties, strictly speaking.

The second option would be to embrace Davidson's view of events, and try to modify it to give a place for properties. Such a modification of Davidson's view may not be as dramatic as it may first appear, for two reasons. Firstly, the core of Davidson's account of events is the individuation conditions on events, and as far as Davidson is concerned, these individuation conditions are spelled out in terms of an event's causes and effects. Now, we can retain the claim that events are to be individuated in terms of their causes and effects, whilst claiming that events can have *properties*. So, the fact that we are welcoming properties into our account of events does not mean that we must abandon Davidson's view of events entirely. Secondly, it is important to re-emphasize that modifying Davidson's account to incorporate properties is not a criticism of my proposed position, but a virtue of it. Recall from section 2.2 that Davidson's neglect of properties in his account of events is highly implausible for metaphysical reasons. So, we certainly should not balk at this modification of Davidson's view.

Whether to adopt a new view of events, or to modify Davidson's own, is a choice that should be dictated by one's background ontology, and which view of events fares best in terms of general metaphysical considerations. For what it is worth, my own choice would be to abandon Davidson's view of events entirely, and embrace Kim's.<sup>19</sup> However, it is a dialectical advantage of my version of anomalous monism that it does not force us to accept any one view of events in particular.

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<sup>19</sup> This is partly because of the much discussed problem concerning whether Davidson's account of events is circular (Quine 1985: 166) and partly because of the theoretical power of Kim's view. However, discussion of all of these issues is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.



## 8. Concluding remarks

As I mentioned above, anomalous monism is currently out of fashion. It is not difficult to see why. The view has been subject to a wide variety of powerful criticisms, most prominently the objection based around epiphenomenalism. I am willing to accept that these are powerful criticisms of certain interpretations of anomalous monism. However, I have argued that there is another version of anomalous monism, which is thoroughly property-realist, and deeply informed by contemporary work on the metaphysics of dispositions and causation, which can avoid all of the objections that have previously been levelled at the view. Given all of this, I conclude that the current unpopularity of anomalous monism is unwarranted, and the view is due for a reappraisal. Anomalous monism is still a serious and very attractive contender in the metaphysics of mind.<sup>20</sup>

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